RAJYA SABHA

Thursday, the 8th May, 1986/18th Vaisakha, 1908 (Saka)

The House met at eleven of the clock, Mr. Chairman in the Chair.

ORAL ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS

SHRI NIRMAL CHATTERJEE (West Bengal): Sir, what will happen tomorrow?

MR. CHAIRMAN: We will discuss it in the Business Advisory committee. Question No. 221.

Indian with Valid Passports in Pakistani Jails

*211. SHRI CHATURANAN MISHRA:
SHRI N. E. BALARAM:†

Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government's attention has been drawn to the news item which appeared in the Times of India of 11th April, 1986 under the caption "80 Indians with valid passports in Pak Jails";

(b) whether Government have taken any measures to ascertain the facts in this regard; and

(c) what are the details thereof and what action the Government of India are taking for their release?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI B. R. BHAGAT): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) The matter was taken up with the Government of Pakistan. The Government of Pakistan have since transferred the prisoners to Central Jail, Multan and allowed our Embassy officials to meet them on 20th April, 1986. Discussions for the release any early repatriation of the prisoners are going on with the Government of Pakistan.

SHRI N. E. BALARAM: Sir, the Minister, in his reply, has said that the matter has already been taken up with the Government of Pakistan and the discussions are going on about this matter. I would like to know how many prisoners are there. There are different reports. One report says that there are about 80 Indians with valid passports in Pakistan jails. Another report says that there are more than 100 people in jails in Pakistan. What crimes have they done? They are all having valid passports along with them. Now, the Minister says that the discussions are going on. I would like to know what is the stage of discussions and whether there is any possibility of some of them being released.

SHRI B. R. BHAGAT: There is a great difference between the number of detenues as per our records and the list of detenues provided by the Government of Pakistan. Whereas, as per our own records, there are 850 Indian nationals in various jails of Pakistan till the 20th of August, 1985. the Pakistan Government have confirmed the presence of only 344 Indian nationals in their jails. Out of these 344, 135 have been convicted and the remaning are under trial. As regards the stage of discussions, as I said, only very recently our Ambassador in Islamabad has written to the Additional Foreign Secretary, Mr. Abdul Sattar and pleaded for their release.

SHRI N. E. BALARAM: Sir, a large number of our fishermen, especially from Gujarat and Kerala are going for fishing overseas. Sometimes, they go astray into the Gulf countries. Sometimes, they are landing in Pakistan for safety reasons with valid passports. Now, this sort of thing will continue. If the Pakistan Government is to arrest them without telling what crimes they have committed, the same thing will be repeated again and again. What permanent arrangement has been made? The situation will continue and the fishermen will go. What permanent arrangements are there for our fishermen? Can we make

†The question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri N. E. Balaram.

some permanent arrangement for getting them released?

SHRI B. R. BHAGAT: Sir, about Indian fishermen in Pakistan jails, there are 55 fishermen from Gujarat and about 30 others from Punjab in Baluchistan jail at present. There are a few others from various other States. These fishermen were caught while fishing on the high seas. They were caught earlier by the Iranian Navy and after a short detention in Iran, they were pushed inside Pakistan territory. Finally, they were captured and put in jail. Most of them have committed no crimes and they are these because they do not hold any valid documents. We are taking up the matter with the Pakistan Government as forcefully as possible.

SHRI VISHWA BANDHU GUPTA: I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether the recent posture adopted by the Pakistan to which the hon. Prime Minister has also referred and the recent developments in Pakistan are likely to slow down the process of this kind of solution to this kind of problem about these people.

SHRI B. R. BHAGAT: The recent domestic development in Pakistan has indeed slowed down the normalisation process that was put in vogue. But this is a different case, Sir, and we hope that the Pakistan Government will see the reason and that they are able to release them as early as possible.

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, even persons with valid passports have been imprisoned for periods far exceeding the punishment legally warranted for their offence. And also in the letters from the jails to their relatives, they have described the conditions of the jails which are very inhuman. Five or six prisoners are put in one cell of the jails. They have to labour hard from early morning till night and get two *rotis* and *dal* to eat. They have written like that. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether he has succeeded in getting the release of at least one person out of 850 persons so far. If not, does it not show that it is because of the law key approach of this Government to this problem?

SHRI B. R. BHAGAT: Sir, as I said, when we got the reports in the newspapers that a large number of prisoners-more than 100 are fasting and are on hunger strike in jail, on 20th April, 1986, our Embassy was allowed to meet them. And we have persuaded them not to go on hunger strike as it adversely affect their status in jail. And some of them have no crimes against them. They were pushed into the jails...

SHRI V. GOPALSAMY: Because of your intervention have the inhuman conditions in the jail been changed and improved or not?

SHRI B. R. BHAGAT: 63 persons were released on 20th February as a result. About the conditions in their jails well, our Embassy has interviewed them, saw them, and they are taking up this matter so that they are at least not treated unfairly or severely in the jails.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Kapil Verma.

SHRI KAPIL VERMA: Sir, according to our Government, 850 nationals are in Pakistan jails. But Pakistan admits only 344. What about the rest? Have you found out where they are? What are the details about them? And the Minister has given details only of fishermen, about 55 fishermen and another 30 prisoners. Who are the other people that have been arrested. How long have they been in jails.

SHRI B. R. BHAGAT: Sir, some of them are for quite a long time. Some of them have been convicted and they are undergoing the sentence there. And some of them have completed their sentence and they have been released and repatriated. Apart from this, there are also the missing persons. And we have given them a list of 43 missing Defence personnel who

are there. But the Pakistan Government so far has not admitted. But we are pursuing and giving them all the details.

SHRI SUKOMAL SEN: Sir, the Minister said that according to our figure, 850 Indian nationals are in Pakistan jails. There is some contradiction. I would like to know from the hon. Minister that out of these 850 Indian nationals, how many have entered Pakistan with valid passports and how many are intruders into Pakistan without any passport. I would like to know whether the Government has got any information about it. Secondly, Sir, May I know whether, in the course of the last talks between our Minister and his counterpart in Pakistan, there was any discussion about the repatriation of the prisoners between the two countries?

SHRI B. R. BHAGAT: Sir, I am sorry, I do not have the figures about numbers. But some of them, even those people, who had the valid documents, they have been pushed involuntarily by the Iranian Government into Pakistan. These are such cases who have not committed any crime. We are trying to give the details of all these and we are trying for their release and repatriation.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Mr. Chairman Sir, I would like to know from the hon. Minister whether there is any estimate by us about the number of people who may be having valid passports but have crossed the border...

MR. CHAIRMAN: You are repeating the question.

SHRI PAWAN KUMAR BANSAL: Sir, kindly permit me to speak. There is a difference and I want to bring out the difference. Whereas in reply to the first question the Minister said some of the people were thrown in by the Iranian Government there may also be some fugitives who crossed over from this side. Is there any linkage between the terrorists and those who crossed from this side? That is the question I want to ask.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Were there any terrorists among those who crossed over?

SHRI B R. BHAGAT: Sir, these are old cases.

MR. CHAIRMAN: He wants the Minister to keep a tab on the movements of terrorists.

SHRI DHARAM CHANDER PRASHANT: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to know from the hon Minister what is the number of Indian convicts in Pakistan who have completed their prison sentences but who are still there? I know the case of one Subhash Jain of Jammu who was sentenced to seven years' imprisonment, which he completed five years back, but he is still in Pakistan. What steps are being taken for their release?

SHRI B. R. BHAGAT: Sir if the hon. Member gives me the particulars of that particular individual, we shall take it up.

Installations of Medilas Yag Lasers in Army Hospitals

*222. SHRI BIR BHADRA PRATAP SINGH:†

SHRI BHAGATRAM MANHAR:

Will the PRIME MINISTER be pleased to state:

(a) whether Government are considering a proposal to acquire the latest Medilas Yag Lasers for surgery in army hospitals; and

(b) if so, what benefits are likely to result from the use of Yag lasers and by when these are likely to be installed?

†The Question was actually asked on the floor of the House by Shri Bir Bhadra Pratap Singh.